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HOUSE RESOLUTION 165
By Hood

A RESOLUTION To honor and recognize Reverend George
Gerald "Jerry" Neely, Jr. on the occasion of his
retirement.

WHEREAS, It is fitting that the members of this General Assembly honor those citizens who have wholeheartedly given of themselves in the service of their faith, dedicating their lives and careers to the spiritual welfare and enrichment of their communities; and

WHEREAS, One such remarkable individual is Reverend George Gerald "Jerry" Neely, Jr. who will be retiring after twenty-two years of meritorious service as Minister of Music for the First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro; and

WHEREAS, Born in Charleston, Mississippi on November 9, 1938, he joined the Baptist Church at the age of ten; and

WHEREAS, A sterling scholar, Reverend Neely graduated from Charleston High School in 1956; he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a Major in Music and a Minor in Religious Education from Mississippi College in 1960 and a Master of Church Music from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1962; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Jerry Neely began his estimable career working part-time for the First Baptist Church in Brandon, Mississippi in 1959; he went on to serve at the Goodyear Baptist Church in Picayune, Mississippi from 1960 to 1962 and the First Baptist Church in Marks, Mississippi during the summer of 1959 and 1960; and

WHEREAS, After finishing his Master's Degree in 1962, he accepted a position with the First Baptist Church in Indianola, Mississippi working full-time with the church music and youth programs; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Reverend Neely moved to West Point, Mississippi, where he ably served in the music and youth programs for the area's First Baptist Church; in 1971, he began serving at the Eudora Baptist Church in Memphis; there, he worked with the church's six choirs, three ensembles, and three bell choirs; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jerry Neely became the Minister of Music for the First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro on December 31, 1978 and was ordained October 13, 1991; and

WHEREAS, Through the course of his duties as minister for the seven choirs, the youth ensemble, the women's ensemble, and the men's ensemble, he earned the respect and affection of the members of his choirs and the congregation of the First Baptist Church for his integrity, dedication, and faith; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Neely has contributed his time and remarkable talents to many of the First Baptist Church activities, including assisting in the planning of the worship services, serving on the Church Historical Committee and the Auditorium Sound Committee, leading the youth missionary trips, supervising the printing of church publications, and directing the youth and adult handbell choirs; and

WHEREAS, An innovative and enthusiastic leader, Reverend Jerry Neely started the children's handbell choir, formed the television ministry, established the Academy of Fine Arts, started the Pops Concerts, renovated the choir room, and expanded the "Singing Christmas Tree" to include multiple performances and a new tree; and

WHEREAS, He has tirelessly led his choirs to unparalleled levels of excellence; for several years, the First Baptist Church received the DNJ's "Ruthie Award," which recognizes the most outstanding church choir in Murfreesboro; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the course of his career, Reverend Neely has participated in numerous church and community programs, including serving as Vice-President of the Tennessee State Chorale, Coordinator of the West Tennessee Handbell Festival, Music Alumni Representative for the New Orleans Seminary, a member of the Shelby Baptist Association Music Council, President of the Tennessee Baptist Music Conference, and Director of the State Handbell Choir Festivals; he has been a valuable participant in the Tennessee Baptist Men's Chorale for twenty-three years; and

WHEREAS, In gratitude of Reverend Jerry Neely's twenty-two years of selfless service, The First Baptist Church devoted a Sunday morning service to Reverend Neely, which included guest speakers and special musical numbers; following the meeting, a brunch was held with performances by the children's choir and the men's ensemble and a tribute to Reverend Neely entitled "Remembering Jerry"; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jerry Neely is blessed with the love and companionship of his wife, Sue, and their two sons, Michael Christopher and Jonathan Andrew; and

WHEREAS, He epitomizes the ideal of the dedicated spiritual leader and reliable friend and neighbor; a source of hope and good will for the members of the First Baptist Church, he will be greatly missed; and

WHEREAS, Although Reverend Neely is retiring, his imprint on the First Baptist Church will indelibly remain; his compassionate and joyful service has made a positive difference in the lives of countless Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jerry Neely's dedication to excellence, his stalwart service to the members of the First Baptist Church, and his commitment to his community is clearly deserving of the respect, admiration, and commendation of this legislative body; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor and recognize Reverend George Gerald “Jerry” Neely Jr. for his immeasurable service to the First Baptist Church, commend his twenty-two years of service as Minister of Music; and extend to him our best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.